



The Delta Strummers

Newsletter Fall, 2016

From the Maestro

Why Perform??

The Delta Strummers have the best of both worlds –we have an opportunity once a week to rehearse our music, ideas, and instruments with a large group of friends and acquaintances, and every so often to perform for an audience. So why perform?? A weekly jam session satisfies the need to make music and learn new skills with our ukuleles, guitars, and even with our voices. So why perform??



Webster says ... to perform is: “to do an action or activity that usually requires training or skill. : to entertain an audience by singing, acting, etc. —used to describe how effective or successful someone or something is.”

But I think there is another twist to the definition; I think the need to perform challenges our inner need to conquer the fear of performing in public. This awareness, that you’re suddenly going to have to perform to friends, relatives, and neighbors, causes many to have some anxiety; No one wants to screw up in public. The awareness that we are about to perform, causes us to sharpen our skills. It gives a purpose to our “jamming” and pushes us beyond the casual attempt to make music. Performing also causes another phenomenon - when it goes well, performing is addictive - It requires you do it again ... there is something to the endorphin rush, the adrenalin that’s expended.

The risk in performing iswhat if it doesn’t go well... what if I screw up??? I have discovered something about the members of the Delta Strum-

mers....they are extremely supportive of all those that risk solo exposure, whether it be instrumental or vocal. This support creates a positive atmosphere that encourages further risk, and thus reward. The Strummers also encourage each other in rehearsal and even performances, to help with chording, vocals, socializing, and making the whole band solid and complete. I’ve been involved with many organizations that did not have the same joy of performance and fellowship that exists in the Strummers. We seem to all leave our egos, accomplishments, and daily torments at the door and work together to make good (no excellent) music every Tuesday.

The latest performance at Summerset IV is a classic example of what happens when a musical group “locks into a performance”. I’ve seen it happen before in other groups, but I confess it’s not every time you perform. Sometimes, a performance is slack....without emotion, sometimes it’s technically incorrect, sometimes it’s with a dead audience. The Summerset IV concert was the best we have done in

... continued on page 6

In this issue

- From the Maestro
- Chairman’s message
- Treasurer’s report
- Origin/background of the banjo ukulele
- Bicycle tours through Europe & surprise ukes
- Practice tips; Making music on the road
- Music selection; 2017 Nominating Committee
- Newswire & upcoming performance schedule
- 2016 Board

Chairman's Message

by John Davelaar

2017 is just around the corner

As we strum our way into the fourth quarter of 2016, and I realize that my tenure as Board Chairman will soon be over, it is with a great deal of pleasure, and appreciation that I thank the band, and the Board, for their continued spirit and enthusiasm. It is because of your efforts that the band has garnered a reputation for excellence, as well as community service and involvement. All this while delivering fantastic entertainment, and having a great time in the process. Thanks to all of you for making my job interesting, rewarding, and enjoyable.



Delta Strummers 501c7 Non-Profit status

As you know, the band is in the process of formalizing our organization as a 501c7 Non-Profit social club. We have retained the services of Holder Law, to prepare the documentation for submittal to the U.S Treasury, and State of California. Our paperwork was officially submitted to the State of California on July 28th, and on October 3rd our forms were submitted to the U.S. Treasury (IRS) for approval. We expect to have the process completed by the end of the year.

What do people say

There is one "comment" which we have all probably heard, or perhaps said, after our first encounter with the Delta Strummers: "They are all having such a great time!". "It really looks like fun." I hear this statement often, and it's a real credit to the band. It's exactly what will keep us growing in number, and stature.

A few more comments

This has been a year of growth for our band, but not just in numbers. The band has made great strides in

other areas. This year, we have seen much more interest in "playing technique". Ernie's promotion of "Strumming and Picking" has resulted in more of our members practicing unique strum patterns, learning to finger pick as we play chords, or better yet, picking blues riffs. All this has resulted in more of us playing instrumental solos during our concerts, and the net effect is a much more interesting, textured, and polished performance ... thanks Ernie.

The band's interaction during practice, concerts, and at our social events, is evidence that we are not just a "Band", but a group of friends, who happen to enjoy playing the ukulele together. It's gratifying to see how well we all get along.

Finally, I cannot leave this topic without mentioning the fantastic "growth" in our Banjo Ukulele population. Remember, It's just not possible to have too many ukuleles!

Kala Brand Music Tour

Our club outing to visit the Kala Brand Music Co. in Petaluma is scheduled for Friday, November 4th. If you have not signed up, please check your calendar and make plans to join us. We will depart from the Sunsetset IV parking lot at 9:00am, and schedule to arrive at the KALA plant at 10:15. The tour will take about 45 minutes, followed by an opportunity to visit the show room and play every ukulele on display. Next stop is a nearby restaurant (TBD), for lunch, before returning to Brentwood.

Until then, keep strumm'en, John

Tom's Quote from the olde country.

To be born in Wales, not with a silver spoon in your mouth, but with music in your blood and with poetry in your soul, is a privilege indeed.

From the 1967 poem 'In Passing' by Brian Harris.

Treasurer's Report

By Wally Coffman

The Delta Strummers treasury remains in good order. Is your ukulele also in good order?



Care and maintenance of your ukulele is very important. If you are still playing with the strings that came on your ukulele, it might be time that they are changed. Over time strings will lose brightness and will sound a bit muffled. Use quality strings, which can be purchased at music stores that carry a large selection of ukuleles. Lamorinda Music in Lafayette sell Aquila Nylgut strings and will also install them. If you need help, several Delta Strummer members have experience with changing strings.

Cleaning and polishing your ukulele is also necessary. Only use products that are made for stringed instruments. Before you install those new strings it's a good idea to use a fretboard oil. Rosewood fretboards will dry out over time and a fret oil will keep the fretboard in good order. Music Nomad manufactures an excellent fret oil and a spray polish. With a little care your ukulele will look and sound its best. Guitar Center also has products that are designed for stringed instrument care. Don't use furniture care products, which contain waxes, petroleum distillates and detergents.

Store your ukulele in way that it is not exposed to cold or heat. Humidity can be an issue in dry climates, such as California. If you have a solid wood ukulele, a ukulele humidifier that fits inside the case is recommended. You can find lots of additional information on the internet, under ukulele care and maintenance.

Wally

Origin/background of the banjo ukulele

By Tom Jones

Credit to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banjo_uke

The banjo ukulele (also known as banjouke and banjolele) is a four-string musical instrument with a small banjo-type body and a fretted ukulele neck.

The instrument achieved its greatest popularity in the 1920s and '30s, and combines the small scale, tuning, and playing style of a ukulele with the construction and distinctive tone of a banjo, hence the name. Its development was pushed by the need for Vaudeville performers to have an instrument that played with the ease of the ukulele, but with more volume.

Construction and tuning: Banjoukes parallel banjo construction, on a smaller scale. They are always fretted. Most are built of wood with metal accoutrements. The banjouke neck typically has sixteen frets and is the same scale length as a soprano or concert-sized ukulele. Banjoukes may be open-backed, or may incorporate a resonator.

Banjouke heads (the drum) were traditionally made of calf skin, but most modern instruments are fitted with synthetic heads. The bridge floats on the head and is held in place by the tension of the strings.

The banjouke is tuned G–C–E–A ("C Tuning"). It was the instrument played by British comedian George Formby (1904–61), who developed his own style of playing to accompany his comic songs. His name is associated with the instrument more than that of any other musician.

Queen member Brian May used a banjouke in the song ***Bring Back That Leroy Brown***, which appeared on their third album ***Sheer Heart Attack***, and also to compose, but not record, ***Good Company*** on the *Night at the Opera* album.

Beatle George Harrison favored the instrument in his later years, using it in several recordings. For example, he played it on his song ***Any Road***.

Touring Spain by bicycle

by Fred Kamp

As some of you may know, Lois and I have taken bicycle tours in Europe the last couple of years. This year, we toured Spain.



Day 1: Seville the capital of Andalusia. Explored the city that has a unique blend of Roman, Arab & Christian art & culture. The cathedral was once a huge mosque. The Alcazar, the old Moorish palace, has been protected and modified for over 5 centuries. It is the home of one of the largest bull fighting ring.

Day 2: We started the ride to Palma del Rio. Stayed in a Franciscan monastery built in 1492. Columbus stayed there before his voyage to America.

Day 4: Bicycled to Córdoba the most cosmopolitan and largest city in Europe in the 11th century. Running water & street lights along with vast libraries where Latin, Arabic & Greek manuscripts were translated existed. The Mosquita, the 2nd largest mosque in the world, would hold 20,000 people for prayers 5 times a day. A Christian church was built inside in the 12th century.

Day 6: Bicycled along the wine road, stopping for wine & olive oil tasting. It's a dirty job, but someone had to do it. We started to enter a more hilly area where the uphill outnumbered the downhill. My legs and lungs were burning as I approached the top of each hill. I asked myself why did I ever sign up for such punishment?

Day 8: Bicycled to Granada that was the dividing line between the Moors to the south and Christians to the north. Here the Moors built the last palace in Spain, the Alhambra, completed about 1490. A well preserved palace and gardens. They surrendered it to the Christians in 1492. It is interesting that, by the time Queen Isabela conquered the Moors, she had no money left, so she gave her personal jewels to Christopher Columbus to fund his voyage.

Barcelona - a wonderful cosmopolitan city with beau-

tiful architecture and vibrant atmosphere. Much like Paris.



I took this picture of a street band with a banjouke.

Fred

From the lobby of Summerset IV Lodge



Delta Strummers on the web

Our web site functions as a communication tool, both to the band and to the external community.

In addition to news and links to numerous ukulele-related resources, the site hosts our Song Book, and our photo gallery. The web server also hosts our (private) member mailing list.

Please take some time to explore the site; You might be surprised what you'll find.

Practice tips

By Patti Leek

Are you struggling to sing and strum at the same time? If so, here are some tips you can incorporate into your practice time that will really help.



Remember, playing the ukulele means you're trying to do three things at once: You're trying to sing the melody, say the words, and strum the chords. In your practice, try leaving out one or more of these elements.

Here are three exercises you can try:

1. **SPEAK** (don't sing) the words while strumming the chords. By eliminating the melody, you can focus on the words and the rhythm.
2. **HUM** the melody while strumming the chords. This takes your mind off the words and lets you focus on the chords and the melody. For a variation, sing the melody to the syllables "lah," "loo," or "lay".
3. **SING** the melody and words while strumming a muted chord, meaning, just rest your fingers gently across the strings, so they are touching them but not pushing the strings onto the fretboard. Using this technique will take your mind off the chord changes, allowing you to focus on melody, lyrics and keeping the beat.

Practicing this way is fun! Challenge yourself to try these exercises every day for a week, then try singing and strumming again. You will feel—and hear—an improvement! Happy strumming!

Patti

Making music on the road

By Tom Jones

One of the things that the ukulele allows us to do is to take our instruments along on our travels.



On prior trips, I've been able to play with several ukulele clubs, including the Buckeye Ukulele Society in Columbus, Ohio and several ukulele clubs in Palm Desert, LaQuinta, and Indio. All these clubs have welcomed me and shared their music.

This summer, while camped at an RV resort south of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Chris (my better half) hosted an "hors d'oeuvres" evening at our campsite. When everyone had filled themselves with food and beverages, Chris suggested I bring out a ukulele and conduct a singalong, which I was glad to do.

Musicians and singers started coming out of the woodwork. One guy mentioned that he used to play with a ukulele band and a banjo band, and Chris promptly sent him "home" to get his instrument. What he returned with was not quite a ukulele or a banjo; He plays a tuba!



After carefully lubricating the valves on his instrument, he proceeded to accompany me (playing a uke), for the entertainment of the group.

Tom

Continued from page 1 ...

the last 5 years It was emotional, under control, instrumentally and vocally well done, and the audience got captured by the band's efforts.

We have all added to our enjoyment of our experience with our instruments because we PERFORMED and we performed well. I know we're rubbing off on the community...we are constantly adding new people, some trained musicians, some new first time players ... all because they sense the joy of our group ... you should be proud of yourselves.

Ernie

Questions For The Board

If you have a question or issue you feel needs to be raised with the entire Board, we make time available to discuss it. The preferred way is to document your question or issue, and submit it to our Secretary, Patti Leek. If you need to address the issue in person with the Board, we allocate a brief time slot in our agenda. The Board will follow up in writing to let you know the result of their discussion and any conclusions or decisions reached.

Music Selection

We're sometimes asked who makes the decision to include or exclude a song, and what's the protocol for adding them to our song book?

The process starts with our "Open mic" sessions, typically held twice a year. Members are encouraged to offer up new music for consideration, and to audition these selections at designated practice sessions. If a member is uncomfortable auditioning their song, they may delegate the audition to another member.

Most of our new music is derived from these offerings and, in fact, over 50% of the songs in our current practice list came from this source.

Music submitted for consideration needs to be in a standard 'lead sheet' format. Songs that could be too difficult for most members to sing, or too difficult for our newer members to play, may need to be transposed into a different key &/or rearranged by our Music Director.

Following audition, music is selected for inclusion in upcoming practice lists by a Music Committee.

When a practice list is created for upcoming performances, lead sheets for all the songs are reviewed, played and sung to identify further changes and, following editing, are added to our online Song Book.

This entire process, from submission to publication, is time consuming, and some prior music offerings have not yet come out the other end; Specifically, music submitted in different formats, or which is not readily playable, gets dealt with as time permits.

As we get closer to a performance, Ernie will take note of which music we play well and which we're struggling with. This usually results in songs being removed from the practice list to eventually end up with a "playable" performance list.

Having participated in a number of groups who don't have this discipline, I can say that their group playing leaves a lot to be desired.

Tom

Nominating Committee - 2017 Board

The Board has chartered a Nominating Committee to come up with a slate of officers for 2017. If someone taps you on the shoulder and asks if you'd be willing to serve, please give it serious consideration. Anyone wishing to serve as a Board member in 2017, please seek out one of the Nominating Committee members or a current Board member.

Nominations will be presented to a Delta Strummers General Meeting, and the membership will be asked to vote on the nominations.

Delta Strummers Newswire

Delta Strummers Fall 2016 Performances

October 21: Summerset IV.

December 6: The Commons at Dallas Ranch.

December 15: Garin School, Brentwood.

Final performance dates/times will be announced in due course.

Directions, playlists, attire and other information will be communicated via email prior to each event.

Check your email

email is our primary vehicle for communicating with Delta Strummers members. New or revised playlists and updated music are uploaded to our web site, and are announced via email. So be sure to check your email regularly.

Group discounts

We've negotiated the following discounts for Delta Strummers members:

Good Hawaiian Shirts will give a 25% discount of their sale price (ask a Board member for the Coupon Code). Ordering information is on our web site under ***Ukulele Resources/Clothing***, but be aware there are different ordering links for men's and ladies' shirts.

Lamorinda Music in Lafayette will give a 10% discount to Delta Strummers members. They have the largest selection of ukuleles in stock of any music store within driveable distance. Store information is on our web site under ***Ukulele Resources/Ukulele Stores***.

Alternative ladies' performance attire

In response to member requests, the Board approved the wearing of a dress or muumuu in place of black pants. Links to the approved designs are on our web site under ***Ukulele Resources/Clothing***.

Delta Strummers name badges

Delta Strummers name badges use magnets for attachment, rather than making holes in clothing. However, they can also be procured with a pin attachment if folks have concerns about any effect on a pacemaker. (Check with your doctor.)

Anyone needing a badge, please contact Jerry or Sue Wiebe. Let them know how you want your

name(s) spelled.

Delta Strummers Polo shirts

We have a local supplier of Delta Strummers polo shirts. Ordering information is on the ***Clothing*** page of our web site.

Delta Strummers on You Tube

We have a number of videos from our past performances on YouTube. If your friends or relatives have video of us performing, please encourage them to either upload them to YouTube or send them to Tom Jones.

Delta Strummers 2016 Board

Chairman Emeritus. Ward Pinther founded The Delta Strummers together with his wife Dorothy.



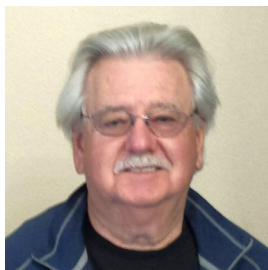
Chairman. When John Davelaar learned that there was a ukulele Band in Summerset, he dusted off his old concert uke and called Ernie. John had played the ukulele in high school, but never had training, or the opportunity to play in a group. He says he's not much of a singer, but loves playing the uke, especially old time Vaudeville tunes, Rag Time, and Bluegrass.



Vice Chairman. Fred Kamp loves all kinds of music from opera to pop (omitting rap). He started playing the ukulele in college and singing with his fraternity brothers but never followed through until he joined the Delta Strummers in 2013. It has added another dimension to his joy of music.



Treasurer. Wally Coffman became involved with the ukulele quite by chance, when he arrived too late for a Delta Strummers performance. He was met by neighbor Norm Soucy and Ernie who pressured him to sign up for a beginner's class.



Wally admits to having a 'weakness' for ukuleles and, within a relatively short period, he owned seven, and it was necessary to place Lamorinda Music on the "Off Limits" list. Ernie feels that an intervention would be in order.

Secretary. Patti Leek grew up in a family of musicians who all played at least one instrument, and family gatherings always included singing and playing together. But, she didn't play a ukulele until finding out about the Delta Strummers in 2014. She thoroughly enjoys playing and singing with the band.



Board member. Tom Jones joined the Delta Strummers in the middle of 2011, having never previously played a stringed instrument. He had sung a cappella since growing up in Wales. Playing the ukulele finally gave him the opportunity to accompany himself.



Board meetings: The Board meets monthly to discuss finances, membership, payout dates & venues, music selection, public relations, and future direction of the Delta Strummers.

Music Director.

Ernie Macintyre was born in Glasgow, Scotland and came to the U.S. as a "wee little laddie". Ernie is a talented musician and accomplished singer, and has a unique approach to teaching musical skills and leading musical ensembles.



He joined the Summerset Singers in 2003 and became Music Director in 2010.

Ernie joined the Delta Strummers as Music Director in June, 2011, and has helped grow the group, both in numbers and musical skills. His 'ukulele beginners classes' have been well attended, and graduates are able to transition to the main band.